

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

IO-11 AID-05 PC-01 CU-02 /077 W

----- 130516

R 222210Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8765

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJECT: RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE NEW MILITARY
GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: THE NEW MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS, WITHIN THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, UNDERTAKEN SEVERAL MOVES WHICH MAY GIVE SOME CLUE TO THE LONG-TERM DIRECTION AND ATTITUDE IT PROPOSES TO ADOPT. THESE INCLUDE AMNESTY FOR MILITARY OFFICERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SEPT. 1 COUP ATTEMPT, APPOINTMENT OF A CIVILIAN GOVERNOR, THE PROMISE OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, AND DIALOGUE BUT FIRMNESS IN DEALING WITH STUDENTS AND LABOR. END SUMMARY.

2. AT 7:30 P.M. ON JAN. 20, MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT COL. RICHELIEU LEVOYER HELD AN ESPECIALLY-CALLED PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO GRANT AMNESTY TO 16 MILITARY OFFICERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN OR DEFENDED THE FRUSTRATED UPRISING OF LAST SEPT. 1. THE OFFICERS INCLUDED RETIRED GENERALS AULESTIA, ORELLANA, JULIO ESPINOSA, GALO LATORRE, ALEJANDRO SOLIS, AND JUAN ARAUJO PROANO, AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF COLONELS. CONSPICUOUSLY MISSING FROM THE LIST WERE GENERALS RAUL GONZALEZ ALVEAR, LEADER OF THE SEPT. 1 COUP ATTEMPT, AND LUIS JACOME, ONE OF

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RODRIGUEZ LARA'S COLLABORATORS DURING THE 1972 COUP WHICH

OVERTHREW FORMER PRESIDENT VELASCO IBARRA, AND DECLARED CRITIC OF THE CURRENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT. GRANTING AMNESTY TO THE 16 MILITARY OFFICERS WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD HEALING CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LEADERSHIP FROM OFFICERS WITHIN THE MILITARY WHO BELIEVE THE ONLY FAULT PARTICIPANTS IN THE SEPT. 1 COUP ATTEMPT BORE WAS THEIR FAILURE.

3. IN A SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT, LEVOYER INFORMED THE COUNTRY THAT THE FIRST CIVILIAN GOVERNOR OF A PROVINCE HAD BEEN NAMED: DR. ALFONSO TRUJILLO BUSTAMANTE, WHO REPLACES ARMY GENERAL JAIME SEMBLANTES AS GOVERNOR OF GUAYAS PROVINCE. GUAYAS, OF WHICH GUAYAQUIL IS CAPITAL, IS THE ECONOMICALLY MOST POWERFUL IN THE COUNTRY, AND THE GOVERNORSHIP IS WIDELY REGARDED AS VIRTUALLY THE THIRD RANKING POSITION IN THE COUNTRY IN TERMS OF POWER. TRUJILLO DOUBTLESS WILL NOT HAVE THE SAME FREEDOM OF ACTION THAT A SENIOR MILITARY OFFICER WOULD HAVE, BUT THE MERE ACT OF APPOINTING A CIVILIAN AS GOVERNOR OF GUAYAS IS BOUND TO CREATE A FAVORABLE IMAGE FOR THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. LEVOYER ANNOUNCED, AT THE SAME TIME, THAT MILITARY GOVERNORS WOULD GRADUALLY BE REPLACED BY CIVILIANS IN THE MAJORITY OF ECUADOR'S PROVINCES. A SECOND QUASI-CIVILIAN (A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER) WAS ALSO NAMED AS GOVERNOR OF LOS RIOS PROVINCE.

4. FINALLY, THE NEW MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS LET IT BE KNOWN THAT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN ECUADOR'S CITIES IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. LEVOYER WAS SPECIFICALLY ASKED ABOUT POLITICAL PARTY PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS, AND WAS REMINDED THAT ADMIRAL POVEDA (PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT) HAD SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONDUCT A DIALOGUE WITH POLITICAL ELEMENTS. LEVOYER HEDGED A BIT BY SAYING WHEN THE GOVERNMENT TALKS ABOUT POLITICAL ELEMENTS, IT DOES NOT MEAN ONLY THE ESTABLISHED TRADITIONAL PARTIES, BUT RATHER OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS AS WELL, SUCH AS STUDENTS, UNIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. THE POLITICAL PARTIES WILL NEED TO RESTRUCTURE THEMSELVES PRIOR TO TAKING PART IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. ON ANOTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTION REGARDING LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, LEVOYER SAID THE "PLAN FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION" WAS STILL UNDER STUDY AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING IN THE FUTURE.

5. FINALLY, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS TACTFULLY BUT RELATIVELY FIRMLY DEALT WITH A STUDENT/LEFTIST LABOR UNION ATTEMPT AT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT. ON MONDAY, JAN. 19, STUDENT AND LEFT-WING UNION LEADERS PLANNED A MARCH

ON THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN CAPPED BY PRESENTATION OF STUDENT/UNION DEMANDS TO THE RULING TRIUMVIRATE. THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO MEET WITH THE STUDENT/UNION LEADERS, BUT DENIED PERMISSION FOR THE "PROTEST MARCH." ORGANIZERS OF THE MARCH WENT AHEAD ANYWAY, AND FOUND THEMSELVES CONFRONTED WITH ARMED POLICE WHO BROKE UP THE MARCH SEVERAL BLOCKS FROM THE PALACE. THE STUDENT/UNION LEADERS WERE, HOWEVER, ALLOWED TO MEET WITH POVEDA, DURAN AND LEORO, WHERE THEY PRESENTED A LIST OF (MOSTLY UNREASONABLE AND FORENSIC) DEMANDS. THE RULING JUNTA HEARD THEM OUT FOR AN HOUR AND 20 MINUTES, AND BROUGHT THE SESSION TO A CLOSE IN AN APPARENTLY HIGHLY AMICABLE ATMOSPHERE. NEXT DAY (JAN. 20) ADMIRAL POVEDA LET IT BE KNOWN THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WELCOMED MEETINGS WITH INTERESTED GROUPS FROM THE BODY POLITIC, INCLUDING STUDENTS AND LABOR, AND WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCH EXCHANGES. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT WHAT WAS MOST NEEDED WAS A SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS, SEEKING CONCRETE PLANS RATHER THAN SIMPLY AN ENUMERATION OF COMPLAINTS. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT'S SPOKESMAN DID NOT KNOCK THE STUDENTS, HE DID INDICATE THAT THE SEARCH FOR RESOLUTIONS OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE SOCIETY NEEDS TO CENTER AROUND PRACTICAL METHODS, RATHER THAN PHILOSOPHICAL OR IDEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS. HE CALLED ON ALL SECTORS OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING BUSINESS, BANKING, JOURNALISM, STUDENTS AND WORKERS, TO OPEN THE DIALOGUE.

6. COMMENT: THESE ACTIONS ARE INDICATIVE OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE A GENERAL TREND IN THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT TOWARD RECONCILIATION WITH OPPONENTS AND OPENING A DIALOGUE. AS A MINIMUM, THEY GIVE NO EVIDENCE OF UNREASONABLE HARSHNESS, WHICH SOME HAD FEARED WHEN THEY FIRST SAW THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMPOSITION OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT, BUT DO INDICATE AN INTENT TO DEAL FIRMLY IN THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, MILITARY GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, PRESS CONFERENCES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976QUITO00626
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760026-0948
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760131/aaaabbgq.tel
Line Count: 158
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by saccheem>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE NEW MILITARY GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, EC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006